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Shortly after the overrun of the U.S. Embassy Tehran 4 November, six official Americans (four male State Department officers and two of their wives) took refuge in the Canadian Embassy. They remained there under the protection of the Canadian Ambassador, although beginning in December the Canadian Government began to grow concerned over the risks to Canadian interests in Iran implicit in any leaks regarding the American officials. The State Department turned to the Agency to formulate contingency exfiltration plans for the six Americans, and coordination between CIA and the Canadian Government, [redacted] began. (b)(1) (b)(3)

The planning culminated with the presentation to Secretary Vance on 10 January of an operations plan, offering three basic alternative cover and documentation packages for consideration by Canadian Ambassador Taylor, in Tehran. It was agreed Taylor would have a major voice in deciding which cover would be used, and it was acknowledged the six Americans would have to be polled on their willingness and ability to live the cover. Once the Secretary's approval had been secured in principle, the plan was conveyed to the Canadians in Ottawa, where certain refinements were made and final concurrence acquired. Activation of the exfiltration plan was then triggered by Ambassador Taylor at a point in late January when the Canadians themselves had decided to close their Embassy.

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On 26 January, two specialists from the CIA arrived in Tehran to provide Ambassador Taylor the necessary technical skills and guidance, and offer the six exfiltrees needed psychological support and prepping in their cover legends prior to their exfiltration. The specialists travelled on non-American documentation, and in alias. Meetings were held with Ambassador Taylor and the six Americans, and the following decisions were made, subject to Washington's approval: (a) the six would leave together, (b) they would exit on Canadian passports and associated documentation including airline tickets previously pouched as part of an extensive counterfeit document package by CIA through Canadian facilities, and (c) their cover would be that of a notional U.S.-based but internationally-financed and staffed film making company. The legend involved the six as having travelled together as part of an advance crew which was scouting locations for a film production on Middle East mythologies, Tehran being one possible locale. The two CIA specialists were to also be part of this venture, arriving separately from Europe and the Far East as producer and production manager. This entire cover had been fully backstopped by CIA in early January by the creation, through cleared film contacts in Hollywood, of the ostensible film corporation in question. The two CIA specialists had actually obtained Iranian entry visas [redacted] under this cover story. (b)(1) (b)(3)

The arrival in Tehran of the CIA specialists gave them the opportunity to compare the entry procedures and cachets with those which had been previously duplicated and pouched into the Canadian Embassy, Tehran.

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Once the CIA specialists were satisfied that their knowledge of Iranian procedures was indeed current, they made appropriate document entries into the passports of the six exfiltrees. These entries reflected apparent arrival in Tehran of the six ostensible Canadian film makers on 26 January from Bangkok, with Iranian entry visas acquired in Ottawa 11 January (these visas were forgeries, reproduced from an original acquired on that date in Ottawa). The arrival information in the passports of the CIA specialists was, of course, genuine.

On 27 January, Canadian Embassy cars took the two CIA specialists and the six exfiltrees separately to Tehran (Mehrabad) airport. As pre-planned, the two specialists were positioned to guide the six through exit formalities in case there was trouble. We do not yet have a report on happenings at the airport, but Ambassador Taylor's "wheels-up" cable to Ottawa confirmed that the six exfiltrees, plus two CIA escorts, were aboard the scheduled Swissair flight for Zurich 27 January.

Arrangements for the reception of the exfiltrees are the responsibility of the State Department. Particular care is being taken to insure that knowledge of either the fact or the method of the exfiltration of these six Americans is kept secret.

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